



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
Public Health

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July 7, 2006

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H.
Acting Director and Health Officer

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF UTILIZATION RATES FOR PUBLIC HEALTH CLINICS

On May 30, 2005, as part of its actions concerning the separation of Public Health from the Department of Health Services, the Board approved a motion by Supervisor Burke, instructing the Director of Health Services to 1) review utilization rates for all Public Health clinics, including South Health Center, and 2) conduct a cost-benefit analysis and examination of the feasibility of partnering with Watts Health Center to provide services currently being offered by South Health Center. This is the interim response to that motion.

Utilization Rates for all Public Health Clinics.

Attached is a chart which displays the utilization of Public Health clinics through the first eleven months of FY 05-06. For the fourteen clinic sites, the total number of visits through the end of May was 322,564. Clinic utilization has remained relatively stable in the past three fiscal years.

Public Health clinics provide categorical clinical services for tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases (STD), triage of other communicable diseases (CD/Triage), and immunizations. Public Health clinics provide care for the majority of active tuberculosis cases in the County and also evaluation and preventive services for their high-risk contacts. Within our clinics, some clinical services are provided by physicians (MD) and others by Extended Role Nurses (ERN). In these clinical sessions, we see the patient each month in the clinic, assuring compliance and adherence to treatment schedules recommended by our Tuberculosis Control Program. After management of their acute illness, active tuberculosis cases receive directly observed treatment (DOT) administered by community workers, who are supervised by our clinical staff. Collectively, all of the tuberculosis-related services in our Public Health Clinics accounted for 115,233, or 35.7%, of all clinic visits so far this Fiscal Year.

The STD clinics not only provide treatment for individuals with STDs, but also conduct contact investigation. The purpose of the investigation/interview is to identify other individuals who may be at risk for developing or having the same "STD". This activity is critical to controlling the spread of these diseases among residents of Los Angeles County.

Where possible, we encourage parents to have children with some medical coverage, vaccinated at their medical home, to assure better integration of immunizations with primary care. However, we provide vaccinations on a "walk-in" basis. The volume increases during the back-to-school period.

Hours of Operation: Registration hours are set to allow completion of clinics during working hours. Public Health Clinics operate between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on each weekday. This is also true at South Health Center, with the exception of Wednesday. In an effort to provide more access to our clients, we are open on Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Based on the Board's motion, we are evaluating revised staffing arrangements to extend clinic hours on Wednesday by opening at 8:00 a.m. and closing at 6:00 p.m. We are also evaluating the practice of publishing more limited registration hours for these clinics.

Operations at South Health Center

Number of Sessions: Currently at South Health Center, we provide services during approximately 49 half-day clinic "sessions" a week, as follows:

CLINIC TYPE	# SESSIONS
TB, MD	9*
TB, ERN	8
STD	12*
Immunization	10
CD/Triage	10
Total	49

*Denotes clinics which use multiple providers at regular intervals.

Each clinic "session" corresponds with a half-day of clinical services. The sessions listed in the table are exclusive of the Directly Observed Therapy (DOT) activities, both in the clinic and in the field, which are continuously on-going.

Number of clients served: South Health Center is the busiest Public Health clinic, with 39,914 visits this year. It is the highest volume STD clinic, followed closely by the Ruth Temple Health Center, in the same Service Planning Area.

Clients turned away for service: Statistics of clients turned away are not maintained on a routine basis. Based on interviews with South Health Center staff, clients are turned away rarely. On occasion, in the STD clinic, patients may be re-directed to the next session if the clinician is beyond capacity. Lines of patients waiting for the health center to open are mostly for the STD clinic and based on the understanding in the community that each clinic session has a limit on the number of patients who can be seen. However, in most cases, accommodations are made to see the patient at South Health Center.

Economic Analysis of Services Provided at South Health Center vs. Watts Health Center

Using appropriations for FY 05-06, allocations for South Health Center, and the projected number of visits, we have calculated an average County cost per visit of \$60.66 per visit.

The Watts Health Center, operated by the Watts Healthcare Corporation, provided primary care under the Public Private Partnership program in FY 05-06 for \$83.82 per visit. This will increase by 12% in July 2006 to \$94. If financially eligible persons with STDs go to the Watts Health Center, the STD visits may be charged to the PPP program. In FY 05-06, Watts Health Center is projected to utilize all of its PPP funding allocation.

Improvements in STD Clinic Operations at South Health Center

In order to try to reduce instances when patients are standing in line for STD services at South and to improve the overall efficiency of the clinic operations, we are evaluating options to change the clinic hours on Wednesdays and also, as part of our review of STD clinic efficiencies related to the syphilis prevention plan, we are evaluating options to streamline the clinic operations across the system. We are also reviewing the practice of publicizing more limited patient registration hours.

Public Health will provide you with a follow-up report on clinic operational issues, including an analysis of clinic staffing, by July 24, 2006. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need additional information or have any questions, please let me know.

JEF:mt
606:008

Attachment

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Director of Health Services

ATTACHMENT
UTILIZATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH CLINICS
 July 2005 – May 2006

CLINIC	TYPE OF CLINIC SESSION*				Immz	CD-Triage	DOT Clinic	DOT Field	TOTAL
	TB- MD	TB-ERN	STD						
Antelope Valley	800	930	1008		6804	12,355	340	1665	23,902
Simms/Mann	0	110	1337		0	6	17	1042	2,512
Central	2844	3290	5621		3956	11,922	277	6223	34,133
Curtis-Tucker	1149	3135	5289		8641	5703	548	4215	28,680
Glendale	1246	1234	1110		5991	7860	533	2617	20,591
Hollywood/Wilshire	2666	1890	5153		4445	13,395	1884	3803	33,236
Monrovia	1901	3925	2188		9027	8014	1153	10,770	36,978
North Hollywood	0	0	1769		196	0	0	0	1,965
Pacoima	1985	2188	1098		2784	8851	778	4273	21,957
Pomona	1905	2587	1495		8386	6670	989	3283	25,315
Ruth-Temple	0	1	6345		5	6	0	0	6,357
South	3241	3483	6806		8168	7214	400	10,602	39,914
Torrance	983	1297	1101		6286	3243	1625	3268	17,803
Whittier	1952	1963	2751		9340	4992	462	7761	29,221
TOTAL	20,672	26,033	43,071		74,029	90,231	9,006	59,522	322,564

***TYPES OF CLINIC SESSION**

TB- MD: Clinic sessions for tuberculosis care with a physician

TB- ERN: Clinic sessions for tuberculosis care with a n Extended Role Nurse.

STD: Clinic sessions for Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Immz: Clinic sessions for immunization services

CD-Triage: Clinic sessions for other communicable diseases

DOT Clinic: Clinic sessions in which patients receive Directly Observed Therapy in the clinic

DOT Field: Sessions in which patients receive Directly Observed Therapy in locations away from the clinic (ie, in the "Field")